

# Horace Sherman Miller

By Allie R. Lopez & Benna Vaughan

Once considered a hub for racist activity, Waco served as headquarters for writer and editor Horace Sherman Miller. An avowed white supremacist, Miller perpetuated and propagated racist ideas in the mid-twentieth century. He printed his newsletter, *The Aryan Views—White Folks News*, in Waco and circulated the publication across the world from 1950 until his death in 1964.

Born in Central Texas in 1901 to Claude Thomas Miller and Lema Yarbro Miller, Horace Sherman Miller grew up in poverty and had an eventful youth. His family moved around the state and out of the country as they searched for opportunities on the railroad. During this turbulent period, Miller's education discontinued. He never attended high school and began his own career with the railroad at age fourteen. He worked in Smithville until April 1917, when he lied about his age and enlisted in the US Navy during World War I. Discharged in 1919, Miller returned to a job with the railroad.

He continued working for railroad companies across Texas for twenty-five years. During that time, Miller married in 1932, but his wife had abandoned him by 1944. Diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis, Miller began to bounce to various sanitoriums across the country and pursued experimental treatments. By 1949, emaciated and bed-ridden, Miller returned to live with his mother and stepfather, William Norris "Nug" Skinner, in Waco.

Once in Waco, Miller began to promote white supremacist ideologies, especially following the 1954 *Brown v Board* decision. Though considered a shut-in due to his tuberculosis, Miller joined the Ku Klux Klan in 1955 and became a Texas Kleagle or recruiting officer. Following the advice and mentorship of Harry

William Pyle, a white supremacist based in Memphis, Tennessee, Miller began organizing and using the status of the Klan to push his message of Aryanism. Eventually, Pyle and Miller split after a dispute over how to pursue white supremacist efforts and their differing ideologies toward Aryanism.

Despite the rift with Pyle, Miller continued using Klan influence to promote his message until 1957. That year, the Grand Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Eldon Edwards rescinded Miller's membership for failure to create any Klan units in Texas in his two years as Kleagle as well as for Miller's inclination to promote personal interests. Miller's agenda and ideas continued to gain momentum, however, especially with the creation of his own mail-order white supremacist group, the Aryan Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

With a typewriter hanging over his bed, Miller began to publish his own newsletter, which featured various titles over the years, including *The Aryan Defender* and *The Aryan Knight Views*. His earlier friendship with Pyle not only aided Miller's short-term participation in the Ku Klux Klan but also helped him launch the newsletter. Pyle functioned as a mentor, edited his writing, and encouraged the publication of *The Aryan Views—White Folks News*. By 1952, the newsletter had one thousand subscribers, and over the years, subscriber numbers steadily increased.

Though affiliated with various white supremacist organizations, Miller personally funded the newsletter. He produced over one thousand copies of each edition and potentially reached more readers through his encouragement to "Read and pass on, please"—a phrase that concluded each issue. Though Miller complained of financial burden, he continued to publish the newsletter until his death in 1964.

The newsletter featured Miller's views—his anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism, opposition to immigration, disapproval of integration and anti-Blackness, anti-communism, and general distrust of the federal government. Miller advocated for states' rights, praised the Confederacy, and supported white

Christian nationalist efforts. While the newsletter featured some of Miller's personal writing, by 1958, he primarily cut and pasted articles from other white supremacist newspapers.

Offering unsubstantiated facts and engaging in fearmongering tactics, Miller insisted that non-white peoples threatened the "white race," and his ideas permeated across the country and world, particularly in Latin America. The content of Miller's newsletter struck a chord with like-minded individuals and groups in other countries and served as a catalyst for Klan-type units and white supremacist networks globally. South America and central Europe were rife with such organizations, and countries like Argentina, Chile, South Africa, and Sweden looked to the American Klan as a guide for pushing their own white supremacist agendas. Miller's publication spread around the globe by his own distribution as well as through sharing amongst groups, which resulted in greater influence abroad than in the US.

Miller printed and mailed over nine hundred issues of the newsletter between 1950-1964. Upon his passing, the mail-order newsletter and sponsoring group died out. Miller donated his collection, including his newsletters, correspondence, and propaganda materials from other countries to The Texas Collection for preservation and future study. While the Aryan Knights of the Ku Klux Klan ceased to exist, Miller's documents reveal the presence and prevalence of white supremacist ideologies over time and how those forces shape the past and present.

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